

“My Role in the Mission” //

Romans 15:14–23 // *The Whole Story* #39 (Multiply 2)

Church Planting Video

Some people say when they come to our church, “I’ve never seen a place that seemed as focused on getting people to leave.” They ask, “Do you not like your people or something?”

No, we always say we send our best... which means that if no one has ever approached you about leaving, that means... just kidding.

No, we want **many of our best feel called right here to the Triangle.** I am. But we **also know that the mission of the church is to MULTIPLY**, which means sending out some of our very best people to be on church planting teams in places that need churches, even when we’d rather keep them here.

- **What you just saw is the story of 2 couples** who did just that—these people were not professional Christians, or seminary trained; just normal people who wanted to leverage their lives for gospel purposes, so they pursued a job in a place where they could be a part of a team getting a church started in a place that really needed one.
- The **#1 reason we hear that people give for why they won’t go** is they don’t know how they will be taken care of financially. In the

Works Consulted:

Tim Keller, “Finishing Well”

Andy Stanley, “Big Church”

John Piper, “Holy Ambition”

Matt Chandler, “The Role We Play”

Tim Keller, Romans for You (Romans 15:16–23)

400 we’ve sent out, we’ve yet to have one who wasn’t provided for financially.

- It **won’t always happen** like you think it will, but God will always provide.

We say that **what it means to follow Jesus is to do what you do well** to the glory of God; and do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God.

- “You’ve got to get a job somewhere, why not get a job in a place where God is doing something strategic?”
 - Lots of factors go into where you choose your career... why not let the largest be the kingdom of God?
 - **Especially you college students and young pro’s:** As you think about the future of your life, why not let where you can be used by God to help start a church be the largest factor in where you pursue your career?
 - Matt 6:33. **Maybe that’s here—maybe that’s here to be a part of this church reaching this community.** Or maybe it will be in one of these places.
- **You’ll hear more** later about an interest meeting, but some of you need to act on that
- You say, “Well, I’ve never considered anything like that.”
 - Look, if the Cubs can win a World Series, that is **a sign from God that this ought to be a year of firsts** for you. So go to the interest meeting.

(Introduction)

Which leads me to today. How do you know specifically what God wants from you?

I saw a statistic the other day I thought was fascinating: **Desires Teens Hold for Their Future.** High school students were given a list of things about the future and asked which 3 were the most important to them (not Christian students!)

Several did not make the list, which I found surprising:

- Only 18% listed “Achieving fame or public recognition”
- Only 25% said, “Working in a high paying job”
- 27% said “Owning the latest household technology and electronic equipment”
- 28% said “Owning a large home.”

All pretty low. Here’s what scored high on the list:

- Having a clear purpose for living (77%)
- Having one marriage partner for life (82%)
- Having close personal friendships (84%)
- Having a college degree (88%)
- Making a difference in the world (96%)

I think most people, regardless of their age, want to know what their divine purpose is and that they are fulfilling it!

- **Listen: You have one.** How awesome would it be if I could just tell you what it is?
- Think about it: How excited would you be about that? Imagine I had an envelope up here with your name on it, signed by Jesus, notarized by Gabriel ... *This is the specific role you are supposed to play.* People would line up around the block!

Paul in Romans 15 explains that he had found just that... and while his calling **will not be identical** to yours, he lays out the path for how you can discover yours.

(Multiply Intro)

I’m also going to apply this very directly to a season our church is in right now that you heard about last week called *Multiply...* (**booklet**)

- We believe **God has called our church** to a number of specific things in reaching the Triangle and the world, and since you are a part of this church, he has a specific role for you in that.
- As you heard last week, **the heart of our church** is seeing the gospel multiply **deep** into our lives, and **wide** throughout the world.
- In the **next few weeks, we’re going to keep diving** into the specifics of what that looks like.
- But listen, **MULTIPLY** has never been primarily about meeting financial goals; it is about **100% of our people living out the will of God** in their lives, which means giving the first and the best of our resources to God.
- We **don’t start from the presumption that the kingdom of God has financial needs** we are trying to meet.
 - **God has no needs**, and has never needed us.
 - We **start from the presumption** that God DESIRES and DESERVES our **first and best** in our finances, and wants us to live as disciples of Jesus in this area, in proper response to the generosity of the gospel to us.

Last year, a bunch of us (4870 total; 1290 first time) made a 2-year commitment to do just that: we committed to 2 years of radical generosity toward the mission of God here at the Summit Church.

- **We are right now at the halfway point,**
- and as we look forward to the year ahead, there are **3 GROUPS** of you out there I want to specifically address: (1) those of you who are new to the Summit, and I want to invite you to join in with the rest of us; (2) the many of you made Multiply commitments, and things have gotten tough, and I want you to encourage you to finish strong—to show the same faith now that you showed when you made the faith commitment; and (3) those of you who made

Multiply commitments, God is moving in your heart to increase them.

Romans 15:14–23

Okay, Romans 15, starting in verse 14...

¹⁴ I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. (This, in Paul's mind, was the **goal of ministry**—a church filled with members who are able to instruct each other—a group of disciple-making disciples. **This is our goal for you**—that the **gospel would grow deep enough in you** that you, personally, are able to disciple someone else—deeper in you so that it can grow wider through you).

Now, Paul starts talking about **his ministry specifically**: ¹⁵ But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God (Paul's gifting was to be a writer and teacher) ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Paul saw Gentile salvations like a *specific offering* that he was making to God.

¹⁷ In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, (his was a ministry of word and deed—preaching the gospel with his mouth, and demonstrating it through his life) ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ (Paul was not saying, of course,

that all the work of ministry was done, but that he had **fulfilled HIS part** of it); ²⁰ and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, ²¹ but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

There's so much in this passage we could focus on, but here's what I want to highlight: Do you see all the **really personal phrases** Paul uses to talk about his ministry? (How could you not? Highlighted them and yelled about each one)

- Vs. 15, Grace given me by God for ministry
- Vs. 16, My offering
- Vs. 17, My work for God
- Vs. 18, What Christ has accomplished through me
- Vs. 19, I have fulfilled my ministry
- Vs. 29, My ambition

Paul seems **really clear about what his purpose is**—to personally take the gospel where people had never heard it.

Now, his particular assignment, his role—to take Christ where he'd never been named—was not the same one given to everyone.

- **Peter** was called to stay in Jerusalem.
- **Apollos** was a build-on-others'-foundation kind of guy (1 Cor 3:3–11).¹
- **Furthermore**, limiting himself to places where people had never heard about Jesus had **not always been Paul's exclusive focus, either**: at the beginning, he spent a lot of time in Jewish synagogues, teaching church leaders, and etc. But by this point in his life he had **narrowed his life down to a specific ministry focus** (it was like a funnel that started broad)

¹ Douglas Moo, *Commentary on Romans*

In fact, **in vs. 22–23 he explains** how this functions as a decision-making grid that helps him make decisions: [22] **This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.** (*This*: that is, my specific assignment. “I’ve wanted for a long time to come to you, but couldn’t because I was constrained by this specific calling.” Paul had the confidence to say “no” to opportunities because he was sure of God’s “yes” in his calling. So he knew how to turn down good ideas for his life so that he could focus on the God ideas for his life)

Now, again, this what we all want, right? A clear sense of purpose that helps us make decisions.

Has it happened to you? Has God pinpointed for you those couple of things you are really supposed to be about in his kingdom?

Paul’s understanding of his purpose came from 2 things—a 2-part path of discovery we all must go down.

I. Understanding the purpose of God in the world

- Notice how Paul grounds his understanding of *his* purpose in what God had declared to be *his* purpose—God’s own purpose—in Scripture.
- See, vs. 20, I make it *my ambition* to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named... ²¹ but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”
- Honestly, I would have expected Paul to have started his explanation of his purpose with the Damascus Road experience, where Jesus says, “Paul, preaching to the Gentiles is I what I want you to do.”
- But that’s **not what he does. He starts with Scripture.** **God’s purposes in Scripture are the foundation for Paul’s purposes in life.**
- **I start here because we have many people** trying to figure out the will of God for their life who have not stopped to ask what God’s purpose is in the world.

- When I ask people what they want to do, I hear things like:
 - “I want to be a great doctor, one of the best heart physicians in the world.”
 - “A corporate lawyer.”
 - “A lawyer who does a lot of pro-bono stuff to help the oppressed.”
 - “A professional basketball player—buy a nice house for my mom.”
 - “I want to own my own business.”
 - “To teach 3rd graders.”
 - “I just want to make a good living—maybe 6 figures one day, and retire nicely.”
 - Or just, “Do my best and provide for my family.”
 - I met a rich guy one time who had retired early who told me his life’s ambition is to own the largest collection of (a particular kind of sports car). I said, “Wow. My hope is to own the largest collection of Nicolas Cage memorabilia on the planet.”
- **Most of those things are fine.** But when I ask them what this agenda has to do with God’s agenda, I get these blank stares.
- God is doing something on earth he has told us about very clearly in Scripture—and our understanding of our ambition has to begin with his.
 - **We talk about finding God’s will**—it’s not really lost. 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not willing...”
 - **If your life is not part of that grander purpose**, from God’s purpose, it is a purpose-less life, a wasted life, even if you do some really good things with it.

Paul recognized, you see, that with the “discovery” (shall we say) of the gospel, comes the responsibility to be a part of spreading it.

Here’s how Paul described the foundation of his calling at the beginning of Romans: **I am under obligation both to Greeks and to**

barbarians (anyone not a Greek or Jew), both to the wise and to the foolish.” (Romans 1:14).

- **“Under obligation”** is a term they would use when you were severely in debt to someone.
 - Say that you owe the mafia ½ million dollars. You get an inheritance of \$50,000—You can’t spend that however you want. You can’t buy a new sports car. You are under obligation—they get the first and best of all your income.
- **Paul feels that way to the Greeks and barbarians.** Why? What had they done for him?
- They hadn’t done anything. But Jesus had saved Paul, and the Greeks and barbarians were no more undeserving of salvation than he was. And so Paul understood that with his reception of the grace of the gospel, he was put under obligation to use his life to bring it to people who didn’t know about it.
- *Where would you be without Jesus? Same place millions of people are without you.*
 - *Doesn’t matter if Jesus died 1000x if no one ever hears about. And the way they hear about it is through our efforts and sacrifices.*
- Our friend David Platt says it this way: **“Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to every unsaved person this side of hell.”** David Platt

CANDID moment: I used to think the **gospel was unfair**. Like God was **holding people accountable** for something they had never heard.

- Like he would **show up at people’s bedside** when they died and say, “Ha! You never asked Jesus into your heart!” And they’d say, “Jesus, who?” And he’d say, “It’s too late now!” And **as their souls went tumbling down into hell**, he’d mutter “tough cookies” in Latin or something.
- But **Paul explains in the book of Romans** that people will be judged only according to the light they had access to.
- You say, **“Well, ok, then they are not responsible to receive Jesus**, since they have never heard about him.”

- But **here’s the thing:** Paul explains in Romans 1 that every human being that has ever lived is a sinner, and has suppressed the truth about God that they do know.
- **Romans 1:18–23**, Every human knows about God from creation and their conscience—and our hearts have rejected his authority and glory and stolen it for ourselves.
 - We’re **not condemned for not hearing** about Jesus, we’re condemned because we rejected the authority and glory of God we perceived with our hearts.
- **The gospel is an undeserved second chance.**
- **You see**, if the only people who are responsible to receive Jesus are those who have heard about him, **you might say, “Paul, maybe it’s better you don’t go tell people in the world about him**, because after you tell them they become responsible. Maybe it is better to leave them in ignorance and hope God has mercy on them, rather than putting them under jeopardy by presenting them with a gospel they might reject.”
- **Romans 1 is Paul’s answer** to that. All people are already “without excuse.” **Romans 1 is written about those nations** who have never heard, showing how they are already under condemnation for rejecting the light that they did have.

Hear this: there is only one hope for every person in the world: hearing and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When I first understood this was late college... My 3 choices

- **Deny:** become a liberal. But I knew that wasn’t intellectually consistent. Not a Burger King Jesus, Build a Bear Jesus
- **Ignore:** what most Christians seemed to be doing, but that seemed worse than unbelief. Emotionally disconnected from my beliefs
 - **Rhonda**

- **Embrace:** to say, God, I'm going to use my life, as best I can, to make a difference.
 - **With the knowledge of the gospel** comes the responsibility to take it to those around the world who have never heard it.
- **I started out thinking the gospel was unfair;** it is fair—it is more than fair, it is grace!
 - What is not fair is that those of us who have heard it to not do all we can to bring it to those who haven't.

Have you examined the priorities of your life through that lens?

- Some of you are very sensitive to the world's needs. You want to make a difference. **The greatest need in the world is for people to hear about Jesus.**
- You want to relieve suffering. That is good. Eternal suffering is the greatest suffering.

You have a specific part in this! It may not be identical to Paul's (you may not be gifted to write and preach, or called to personally go live in an unreached people group)

- You might be—we have **teams going out all the time to places with no gospel witness**
 - Currently, 378 of our members have gone out to live overseas
 - **20** serving through our Global Cities Initiative (i.e. going overseas with business—with **another 75** more actively investigating going)

That **may not be your role, but you have a role.**

- It may be to go on one of our **domestic church planting teams**—over 400 have done that. To transfer your job to be a part of a church plant.

- It may be to **stay here and reach your neighbors and co-workers with Jesus** and be a big part of the Summit Church's mission of reaching, discipling, and sending—financially and otherwise
- It may be to help reach an **underserved part of our city** with the gospel

I'm not sure what your part is specifically, but each of you have a part. Which leads me to #2...

II. Sensing the *gifting* of the Spirit in you

- **After Paul recognized the overarching purpose** of God, spelled out in Scripture, he learned from the Spirit of God his specific role in it.
 - *His purpose. His calling. His ministry. His offering. His ambition.*
- And, **like I explained at the beginning...**
 - Paul's calling was **not the same as everyone's**: Peter and Apollos, for example, were different.
 - **And Paul honed in his calling** over time.
- What **Paul developed was an ability to be led by the Spirit of God.**
- I've told you before that **most Christians don't know what to do** with the Holy Spirit, or how we are supposed to relate to him.
 - Some are **obsessed** with him...
 - For others, he is the **forgotten member** of the Trinity.
 - They relate to him like I relate to my **pituitary gland...**
- That's **not how the early church thought of him.** In the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit shows up 59 times. In 36 of the times, he is speaking, directing.
 - It **doesn't always tell us how he spoke** (Acts 13:2—how?), which can be frustrating... (though I think is intentional, because more havoc was been wreaked in the church following the words, "God just told me..." God wants us to be humble about it.)

- So, yes, there is some ambiguity in how we speaks, but it is also an error to say that because of that he doesn't speak.
- **Y'all, I know that not everything in the book of Acts** happens in exactly the same way today, that some things are different. But you can't convince me that the only book that gives us examples of what it looks like to walk with the Spirit of God is filled with stories of people whose experiences have nothing in common with our own!
- In fact, **to know our specific calling, we depend on him to show us.**
 - **I actually wrote a book on this:** *Jesus, Continued...* to attempt to answer the question of how you can identify his voice in your life.
 - **Won't go into all that today**, but one of the main things the Holy Spirit does is identify your particular gift in the mission.
 - I've heard it described in several ways:
 - **SHAPE: Spiritual gifts; heart, ability, passions, experiences**² Warren's point: You know what God wants for your future by looking at what he's done in your past.
 - **VENN DIAGRAM: Ability, affinity, affirmation**³
- Again, this is **not the place where I can go in deep** on that... **but one thing is for sure:** You'll **never know your specific role** in the mission until you understand the unique ways God has shaped you and the distinctive gifts he has given you for the mission.
 - Well, it wouldn't be a sermon without a C.S. Lewis reference. **Father Christmas** in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*: the way you know what God wants from you is by looking at what he's put inside you.

² Rick Warren, from *Purpose Driven Life*

³ Not sure who originated this. In the business world, I saw it in Jim Collins' *Good to Great*. I've seen Tim Keller use it, too.

⁴ **Engineer** (drives the truck); **Company Officer** (commands everyone on the truck; also in charge of busting down doors if needed);

The thing to remember is that whatever gift you have, you are supposed to interpret it in light of the bigger picture of **God's purposes stated** in his word—to get the gospel to the ends of the earth!

- **Fire truck.** Get 5 people on stage and have them act out 5 different roles on the firetruck.⁴ "I normally don't do this kind of stuff, but real quick, I need..."
- "What's your primary job, again?"

The church has one mission, stated in God's word, that Paul quotes in vs. 21: That "those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

You say, "Well, Pastor J.D., you've got me wondering how to do this. Besides getting *Jesus, Continued...* which, by the way, I don't make any money on copies we sell at the church—that all goes to the church), but besides that, how am I supposed to figure this out exactly?"

- **Practice whatever spiritual gifts** you believe you do have
- Be in **discipling relationships**. One of the best ways to figure out your spiritual giftings is by having others who can identify them in you and call them out.
- Go on **mission trips**. That's like the microwave version of learning all this stuff.
- And, lastly, I'd challenge you to **think through** this statement: Whatever you're good at, do it well to the glory of God, and somewhere strategic for the mission of God.

Nozzleman (handles and aims the hose itself); **Backup firefighter** (Assists the nozzleman by keeping the hose untangled...which is apparently quite tough). **Tillerman**.

(Application to Multiply)

Now, like I told you, I want to apply this to this emphasis we are in called **Multiply**. As a church, we are trying to respond to what God is doing in the world, and specifically, what he's leading our church to do specifically to make Jesus famous in the Triangle.

Each of you, as a part of this church, has a role in this, and that includes financially.

So, first, we recognize that we each have an obligation to the gospel. Receiving the grace of the gospel comes with the responsibility of spreading the grace of the gospel.

- **Where would you be without Jesus? The same place millions are with you...**
- We ought to give to the point that people ask, *Why do you give away so much money?* And we say, "Because Jesus gave his whole life for us."

Second, we want to each be very sensitive to anything special the Spirit of God wants us to do. Our giving is a **combination** of a grateful response to the generosity of the gospel, and a sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit of God.

- **Here's a challenge:** Have you laid it all on the table, and asked the Spirit of God what he would have you do?

Specifically, I want to talk to 3 categories of people:

1. There are some of us in the room today who are **NEW** to the Summit Church or new to Multiply and you have little or no idea about what this Multiply initiative is.
 - You joined our Summit family sometime after last November and you wonder, "What is this Multiply journey, and how do I become a part of it?"

- **100% of us responding to the gospel, and 100% of us saying yes to the HS.**
 - **If you are new**, I'd say, "God may have brought you to this church for just this time. We're excited about partnering with you in discovering your specific role in the kingdom of God, and want you to be fully and deeply committed here."
 - So if you are someone who was either not with us last fall, or you haven't yet made a commitment, I want to encourage and challenge you to join up now and BE A PART OF THIS:
 - Surrender what you have to Jesus, ask for the direction of the HS.
 - **Then**, make a 12-month commitment for the remaining year of Multiply.
 - **You won't regret** it for 1 minute!
2. There are others of you who made a Multiply commitment a year ago, and since then hard times have come and things have gotten difficult. Ask God to give you the same faith to finish the commitment that you used to make the commitment. **FINISH STRONG!**
 3. Some of us made a Multiply commitment, and while **it hasn't been easy**, and has probably required a LOT of sacrifice, **you are sensing that God is stretching you to take another step of faith** for him. To **INCREASE** the commitment you made last year.
 - You see, if **Multiply truly was a discipleship journey...**
 - it was never just about **gathering commitment cards** and getting totals.
 - It was a **journey to become more like Christ** in how we use our resources.
 - Does the **number you committed** to still represent a **faith step** for you? A sacrifice? Your first and your best?
 - For some of you, the answer is **no.**
 - Last year, **Veronica and I stepped out and took the largest step of faith we have ever taken with our Multiply**

commitment, and I will tell you, it has NOT been easy... But even for us and our 4 children, we have been compelled by all that God is doing around here, and we want to sacrifice even further for him.

- But we are so excited about what God is doing... we see the opportunities. He has blessed us so much. We want to give in a way that is a proper response to the gospel. So when we ask ourselves, **does this number still currently reflect that God is truly getting our first and our best...** our answer is going to be a larger number.
- And I am going to guess that that **might be true for some of you** as well...

To all 3: begin a journey of prayer...

Summit: God has put us in RDU at this time, for this hour. Clearly his hand is on us.

- We **understand his purposes** in the world, and he's **given us dreams** to reach this city and expand our reach into the world,
- and **step by step God is revealing his even greater plan** for us to do that.

This **step of faith for Summit is the largest thing** we have ever done as a church. It is literally going to *change* our church and the future of the Triangle.

Conclusion

HEADS BOWED: **Are you ready to put your "Yes" on the table in all areas of your life**, and say, *"Here am I, Lord, send me! I understand your global purposes and wanted to be used by God in them. Show me what you would have me do in Multiply, and reveal to me the specific callings and gifts you have given me to be used in your kingdom."*

A FT guest with us? Not talking to you... but hope you see what we are about. We have been blessed by the gospel and are always pushing ourselves to extend that blessing. We hope you'll receive Jesus. Many people were generous so you could hear. Ultimately we hope you'll receive him, and then join up with our mission.

